

Holloman congregates for National Prayer Breakfast

by Tech. Sgt. Ray Bowden
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More than 200 Airmen and civilians congregated at the Enlisted Club March 9 to support Holloman’s National Prayer Breakfast organized by the 49th Fighter Wing Chapel.

The National Prayer Breakfast, formally known as the Presidential Prayer Breakfast, began in 1942 when members of Congress began meeting weekly for prayer.

The theme of this year’s National Prayer Breakfast was “So help me God: A reflection on the military oath.”

According to Staff Sgt. Keith Holycross, 49th Fighter Wing chaplain’s assistant, the theme is a reminder for Team Holloman members to remain true to their faith.

“When faith is lost, we lose a part of ourselves - a part that gives us strength and makes us who we are,” he said.

While the National Prayer Breakfast presented an opportunity for people to gather and recognize their individual faiths, the doors were also opened to those not claiming any particular religion or belief system.

According to Chap. (Lt. Col.) Timothy Wagoner, non-believers may have attended because their common humanity

binds them together regardless of issues of faith.

“One of the Atheists on base told me he had a deep spirituality, but it was just not theistic in nature. I can buy that – and even that person probably could have found something positive in the National Prayer Breakfast,” he said.

The 49th FW Chapel Service exists to support all faiths and beliefs.

“These events promote interfaith relations, build community and prove we can sit down with someone different than ourselves with respect and acceptance,” said Sergeant Holycross.

The event also provided a chance for servicemembers to pray for national leaders.

“Naturally, we pray for our country and leaders every day – or at least whenever we remember to – or when there is a crisis or national emergency,” said Chaplain Wagoner. “But, the idea of setting one day aside gives us the opportunity to say to ourselves ‘this is important and what we remind ourselves to do on this day, we should attempt every day!’”

Mistress of Ceremonies, Chap. (Capt.) Gloria Tyner, opened the breakfast at 7 a.m. with a few words of welcome before members of the 49th Medical Group Choir



Photos by Airman 1st Class Russell Scalf

Chap. (Brig. Gen) Cecil Richardson, Air Force deputy chief of chaplains, speaks at the National Prayer Breakfast March 9 at the Enlisted Club.



Chap. (Maj.) Bryan Hochhalter, 49th Fighter Wing, leads the audience in the closing song “God Bless America.”



Attendees of the National Prayer Breakfast watch a video reflecting on the oath of military service. “So Help Me God” was the theme for the National Prayer Breakfast this year.

sang the National Anthem to a packed house, followed by an invocation from Chap. (Maj.) Scott Ruthven, 49th FW internal mobilization augmentee.

Attendants were then given an opportunity to partake in a buffet-style breakfast before viewing a 10-minute slide show featuring inspirational photographs of servicemembers from all branches taking oaths of enlistment or praying.

While the food selection appeared to please the crowd, they were here for a higher purpose.

“I’m here to pray,” said Airman 1st Class Paris Doolittle, 49th Aeromedical Dental Squadron. “This event will help me get through the week.”

Airman 1st Class Ed Hood, 49th Communications Squadron, said he considered it his duty to attend the National Prayer Breakfast.

“I think the National Prayer Breakfast is one of the single most important events an Airman can attend,” he said

After a brief introduction by Chaplain Wagoner, featured speaker Chaplain (Brig. Gen.) Cecil Richardson, United States Air Force deputy chief of chaplains, spoke for 30 minutes on spiritual fitness, arguing while some may have a wealth of worldly possessions, they remain poor if they lack a spiritual side.

“Our spiritual fitness needs to match our physical fitness,” he said.

One attendee, Master Sgt. Ray Greebon, 49th Civil Engineer Squadron, agreed.

“Events like the Prayer Breakfast inspire us to balance the external aspects of our lives with the internal. This balance is what makes us whole,” Sergeant Greebon said.

“Our spiritual well-being is just as important as our physical well-being,” said Master Sgt. Greg Henneman, 49th FW historian, also in attendance.

Chaplain Richardson elaborated on the Nation Prayer Breakfast theme, saying servicemembers need to be committed to the promises they make and strive to keep them.

“We need to remain steadfast even in the midst of adversity,” he said.

Chaplain Richardson extolled the virtues of today’s military members, saying, “I continue to marvel at the quality of our servicemembers and their remarkable commitment. They are true warriors; the best I’ve ever seen.”

After Chaplain Richardson concluded his message, Chaplain Tyner invited Brig. Gen. Kurt Cichowski, 49th FW commander, to the podium where he presented Chaplain Richardson with a plaque featuring a photograph of the 49th FW Chapel staff.

Chaplain Tyner concluded the event by asking those in attendance to remember the president, military advisors and deployed military members before Chaplain (Maj.) Bryan Hochhalter led the crowd in a rendition of “God Bless America.”

Chaplain Wagoner said he was pleased with the turnout.

“From what I’m hearing, those who were able to attend got a lot out of it,” he said. “This attendance says a lot about the quality of the program we try to provide, the chance to give thanks to God across denominational and interfaith lines.”

Chief Master Sgt. Dale Barton, 49th Fighter Wing command chief, said faith is an integral part of life.

“It’s important we set aside a day to remember our faith. Faith is an important part of lives and one of the pillars of our strength, along with family and friends,” he said.



Ms. Karen Hochhalter plays music on a keyboard at the National Prayer Breakfast.